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| Executive Registry | |
| 86- | 3938 |

2 September 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Intelligence Office for USSR
Director of Soviet Analysis, DI

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: SSCI Comments on Soviet Intelligence Estimates

1. What would you say in response to the comments on our Soviet estimates reflected in this memo of a conversation between General Odom, Sy Weiss, and half a dozen members of the SSCI?

2. Relevant to these issues are the recommendations made on improving the NIC program in responding to a memorandum from Hal Ford and Graham Fuller, and Bob Gates' memo on the DI research program.

3. I'd like to get your thoughts to put together with this material for a discussion with Sy Weiss' Military Advisory Panel and perhaps with key members of the SSCI.



William J. Casey

cc: DDCI

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EYES ONLY

August 7, 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR WILLIAM CASEY/ROBERT GATES

SUBJECT: Senate Intelligence Committee: Soviet
Intelligence Estimates

1. Bill Odom and I were invited to meet with the above subject Committee. Senators present: Durenberger, Cohen, Nunn, Bradley, Murkowski and Hecht.

2. The Committee's interest was two-fold: first, how could the Intelligence Community process for producing estimates on the USSR be improved and second, what was Soviet policy going to be. (In the discussion the two often became inter-twined.)

3. Process. You know my views on improvements to the process: I shall not repeat them here. Of possible interest to you may be Senatorial comments:

-- Bradley implied that the process cast up estimates with little innovation or introspection. "What we need is an assessment of what Gorbachev's most intimate adviser might be saying which might differ from what the Soviet bureaucracy might be saying."

-- Bradley, Cohen, Nunn expressed concern that the estimative process was not positioned to anticipate possible major changes in Soviet policy.

-- All Senators argued that outside experts, e.g. from academia, seemed able to come up with new ideas about, and alternative estimates of future Soviet objectives which the I.C. was unable to do.

-- Cohen primarily (but others also) bemoaned the lack of insights into "Soviet politics," which appeared to include Soviet doctrine, dogma, etc. (The Committee was interested to learn that CIA had established an in-house training course, including use of outside experts, to improve knowledge and insights into this area.)

-- Nunn primarily (but others also) wondered how we could stimulate "maverick" views.

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4. Substance

-- Bradley (but others also) seemed to argue that significant change might be taking place which the estimates were missing. "The Committee is assured that there is essentially no possibility for a major change in Sino-Soviet relations and the next day Gorbachev makes significant offers to meet China's three conditions for improved relations." (Bradley appeared less than satisfied when Odom and I said that there could be a world of difference between word and deed. Still, in fairness the Committee apparently has seen no intelligence assessment on what it would take for the Soviets to meet, in whole or in part, the three PRC conditions. They are fearful U.S. policy could be caught off base.

-- Bradley, Nunn and Cohen were interested in the potential for other changes. "The Soviets have large economic problems; couldn't these force major changes?" (The Weiss/Odom response: the marginal changes Gorbachev is pushing won't do it, the solution to Soviet economic problems require fundamental systemic changes which could endanger regime's political control.)

-- Nunn and Cohen were interested in prospects for arms control. While professing to share the general assessment of limited prospects for major breakthroughs, both were implicitly critical of those assessments. Cohen wondered whether U.S. policy could not have an impact on Soviet attitudes. (Did he have in mind the old canard about action-reaction? Or was he thinking about unilaterally constraining U.S. defense programs to set an example? Unclear.) Nunn talked about the importance of using arms control initiatives to educate our own people and the Europeans. Nunn and Cohen both deplored the lack of clarity in U.S. arms control objectives; Nunn thought we had never even been clear on what we thought Soviet objectives were. (I argued that we were clear as to Soviet objectives. Arms control enthusiasts simply do not like the current intelligence assessment. On use of arms control for educational purposes, I urged caution. Whatever our original purpose, Americans in general and the Congress in particular get impatient. The cry goes up for "flexibility" a euphemism for "make concessions." Given the asymmetry in our two societies the Soviets do not have to contend with such self generated pressures. Result: They stonewall, we make concessions and in the end we sign bad agreements.)

(I was later called by Bradley's staff man who said the Senator was impressed by my 1984 Commentary article on arms control and would like to have a further exchange of views. The Senator's current "unpopular effort" is supporting Contra aid. Speaking sense on arms control might be next.)

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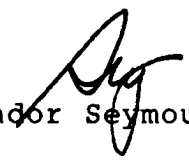
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-- Nunn and Cohen stated that lack of clearly articulated objectives hurt SDI. Cohen said the Congress was prepared to support point defense right now, but the Administration rejected this as inconsistent with population defense. Nunn agreed. (Leaving aside the question of the validity of the judgment that the Congress is prepared to support "point defense" there seemed to me to be considerable confusion worth trying to clear up.)

5. Other topics touched on:

- o Afghanistan. Is a deal to get the Soviets out possible?
- o Future crises confrontations with the Soviets were accepted as probable. Is our intelligence and our policy adequate to meet these expected contingencies?
- o Soviet potential vulnerabilities, such as a hostile East Europe, were mentioned. The Moslem population and Afghanistan was mentioned as another vulnerability.
- o Institutionalizing the Team B approach, as a means for gaining insights other than those estimates produced by the Intelligence Community, was mentioned by Nunn.

6. I noted that many of the ideas which had been discussed were in fact being adopted by CIA. (No reaction.) Perhaps it is worth informing the Senators about the innovative approaches CIA has adopted -- if this hasn't already been done.


Ambassador Seymour Weiss

CC: Secretary of Defense

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22 September 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Douglas J. MacEachin
Director of Soviet Analysis

SUBJECT: SSCI Comments on Soviet Intelligence Estimates

REFERENCE: Memo from DCI to D/SOVA, same subject, dated 2 September 1986

1. Action Requested. No action requested. This memorandum responds to your request for my thoughts on the SSCI comments on our estimates reflected in Sy Weiss's memorandum of his session with Committee members.

2. Background. I would start with the point Sy makes in his final paragraph, where he says he noted for the Committee that many of the ideas the Committee members raised were in fact being adopted, but got no reaction. Sy recommends that the Committee be informed about the innovative approaches CIA has adopted--if this hasn't already been done. In fact, I know the Committee has had sessions along these lines with Bob Gates and others. I doubt if communications with the Committee are going to turn the members around, but I think a session with them regarding your new approaches would be useful. Certainly, the approach you have taken recently goes a long way toward correcting those flaws of legitimate concern to the Committee.

3. One point I think should be made is that ideas which are "new" and "innovative" aren't necessarily correct; and what is new and innovative when done by outside experts often would be considered irresponsible if done by the Intelligence Community. Policy makers don't need ideas for their own sake, or to serve as straw men. Unlike Professor So-and-So, we have to stand behind our estimates.

4. On the other hand, I have a great deal of sympathy for the notion that we need to be more tolerant of and make a greater effort to display what Senator Nunn referred to as "maverick views," when they stand the test of thoughtful rigor and when they are presented in a responsible manner. In this regard, I frankly think CIA too often leaves the "alternative views" to other NFIB agencies, and we try too hard to avoid saying things that will prompt articulated disagreements--we don't care for alternative views even when they are not our own.



B-45-11

All portions of this memorandum
are classified Secret



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SUBJECT: SSCI Comments on Soviet Intelligence Estimates

5. I think it is the general lack of receptivity to disturbing, potentially boat-rocking views that is the root cause of most of the individual problems cited by the members. For example, the Committee complains that the estimative process is not positioned to anticipate possible major changes in policy. But the idea of major change, when it first surfaces, is usually treated as a maverick idea. The issue of changing Soviet outlook on nuclear war is a case in point. In the latest NIE, this issue is a source of split text, which is as it should be, given the range of views. Had we tried to get it into an NIE when we first developed the analysis (over a year ago), however, I doubt that we would have been able to insert it into the text or even a footnote. At that point in time it was a maverick idea. Similarly, I think the idea that the USSR might really confront and act on the need for certain basic reforms is treated as a maverick idea, and not given the space it deserves. On balance, I guess I share the view that it is unlikely, but it worries me that conventional wisdom tends to dismiss it out of hand. I am not talking about reform that would make the USSR like the West (there are too many centuries of history to overcome) but we could be in for some changes over the next 10 to 15 years which, when examined in hindsight, would seem far more dramatic than was registered at the time they occurred.

for Douglas J. MacEachin

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Remarks

To 5/9: Please have joint response to DCI's question prepared soonest.

Executive Secretary

2 Sep 86

Date

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